

Rock Raiders

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The latest revision of Rock Raiders is nearly complete. This revision contains all of the single player missions, vehicles and characters. Two player missions and enemy AI are some of the few items that have yet to be implemented.

Based on the revision of Rock Raiders v.0.1, submitted by Lego Media, the product evaluation group has compiled an evaluation report. Below are the prioritized items of most importance.

The greatest concerns with Rock Raiders are the redundancy of level objectives and the use of the clock in those levels where crystal and Lego Men collection are the primary focus. While it is understood that crystal collection is a central component of the game the manner in which it is presented to the player is not particularly compelling for a number of reasons.

- Due to the imposed time limits the player is afforded little opportunity to explore and is forced into a frantic search for crystals. This provides the player with very little opportunity to improvise or to formulate their own creative plan in which to acquire the crystals. If time is to be utilized as the motivating factor behind the player's action then it is only fair to provide that player with the known location of his or her objectives, otherwise the player is forced to stumble around aimlessly
- The current level design necessitates a trial by error mentality, where the player will lose numerous lives simply attempting to locate the appropriate number of crystals. Once the player has successfully located all crystals the levels become a simple memorized pattern to be performed in a race against the clock.
- The "Silver" and "Gold" mission objectives seem completely artificial and do not necessarily reward the player for being a better or more creative player. Essentially "Silver" and "Gold" awards are simply objects to be located and inundated into the memorized retrieval process, in addition to standard mission objectives.

The following are some suggestions that could greatly improve upon the current level designs.

- Sections of the HUD display are currently cut-off by the edges of the screen. In addition, providing the player with a ratio of the number of items collected instead of a simple whole number would aid the player in accomplishing the mission goals. A player may not always remember the mission objectives once engrossed in level.
- The further incorporation of "Classic Platform" elements in the crystal collection process is highly recommended. There are many platform elements currently in the game, but they could be expanded upon further. Sections requiring a successive series of well timed jumps, negotiation of moving platforms, and timing sequences in order to avoid steaming vents, could all be utilized to make the title a more enjoyable experience.
- The "Hot Scoop!" level is one of the more compelling levels in the game and more levels should try to incorporate this style of puzzle resolution. The vehicles should be the primary focus of the title, and it should be with their use and their ability to manipulate the environment that puzzles are resolved. Too frequently throughout the title the vehicle is no more than an alternate means in which to travel from point A to point B, or simply another means with which to drill rock.
- An example of a more compelling level would be one where the player must first use the Rock Loader to herd enemies into natural pens before any drilling or crystal collecting can occur. The player might have to identify areas large enough for the enemies to be herded into, or the enemies may need to be relocated several times in a level before all level objectives can be met.

- In previous versions there was an additional camera that brought the player closer to the character. Due to technical restraints the developer has noted that the camera cannot be placed too closely. This is unfortunate because the detail of the models is quite good and the game could greatly benefit from additional camera positions, such as an over the shoulder view. Effort should be made to provide a camera view as close to the character as the technology will allow.
- Enemy behavior at this time is still being optimized. Currently enemies are extremely frustrating due to their speed and persistency. An enfeebled enemy will often times recover and attack the player's character when the player is focused on some other activity, such as drilling. Enemies that behave with purpose such as patrolling areas, protecting young, or actively pursuing food are more interesting than enemies that are simply triggered by the player's presence.
- Currently players must wait for the jump mechanic to recharge. It appears that this is intentional to create greater challenge for the player, however it is only frustrating and unnecessary. This title contains some platform elements and it is highly encouraged that more platform elements be incorporated where the focus can be placed on the jumping action rather than the management of the jumping resource.
- Currently the player's character is required to exit vehicles in order to collect items and to identify drillable rock formations. Players should be able to perform both these actions from the safety of the vehicle.
- When attempting to rescue fellow Rock Raiders the collision detection of the jumping Lego men is poor, requiring the player to pass through them several times before a successful retrieval can be made. Touching the Rock Raiders should transport them to the ship immediately.
- When utilizing Analog Control quick direction changes of the character can cause unpleasant camera movement resulting in choppy transitions. In most instances the camera does not need to be repositioned this dramatically.
- Currently there is very little to distinguish the Lego men from one another in their physical appearance. In the menu screen all Lego Men have distinct helmets. In the game all Lego men lack headgear of any sort.
- The appropriate voices should be implemented for the movie cut scenes. Currently the characters only grunt and grumble.

SCEA Third Party Product Evaluation Group